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Post photo by John Makely

Jeff Brown, 14, plays 'Space Harrier' video game.

Video games linked to hostility in study

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"shoot or be shot at" games are a very small percentage of the games in the coin video industry, Lloyd said.

The kids mesmerized by the video machines in Sgt. Singer's Pizza Circus last week seemed to be having too much fun to be concerned about their levels of hostility when confronted by a pesky reporter.

"I get a little bit more hostile," admitted Jeff Brown, a 14-year-old Cypress Creek Senior High student. "If I mess up on a game, I get madder."

Jeff said he liked the games in which he has to avoid being hit. "It's competition. It's better than just shooting at things that are not doing anything to you. There is more excitement to it."

Marco Elizardo, a 15-year-old Westbury High student, said the games make him "feel more aggressive. When I grow up, I intend to be a helicopter pilot."

Chris Cullison, a 9-year-old pupil at Brill Elementary in Spring, loves to play any video game he has money for, said his father, Roger Cullison.

Cullison said he hasn't noticed any bad side effects in his son as a result of the games. "Chris is not aggressive in any aspect. I don't think he has had any ill effects from it whatsoever."

But the games do sometimes increase anxiety in players, said Art Mandegar, manager of the Galleria pizza parlor and video arcade.

Mandegar said he has seen many players, including adults, get frustrated when the games don't go as they would like. When the games turn out wrong, the players will often bang on the machines and curse them, Mandegar said.

However, Mandegar said he has

never seen the players harm anyone after a session on the video machines. "I've been here four years and we haven't had any problems."

Anderson said there is no direct evidence the so-called aggressive video games — while increasing feelings of hostility and anxiety — actually increase people's aggressive behavior.

"That's why we need to study it more. I hope other people will get interested in doing more intensive research on this topic so we can know just what the effects are of playing these different type games," he said.

Since American youngsters, and a fair number of adults, spend thousands of hours dropping quarters into the slots of video games every year, it is important to know what impact the machines have on people, Anderson said.

The video games dominate stores, shopping centers and many other public places and have been the subject of controversy for years.

U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop got into hot water with the video machine industry four years ago when he declared that the games might be hazardous to the health of young people, particularly those emphasizing "zap the enemy." But Koop had to issue an apology the next day, saying his remarks were strictly his personal opinion and not based on any scientific evidence.

President Reagan later told a group of Florida teen-agers the games have enabled many young people to develop incredible hand, eye and brain coordination. "The Air Force believes these kids will be outstanding pilots should they fly our jets," Reagan said, adding that he still favors kids spending time with homework, sports and friends before video games.